

ADDISON CHAPEL  
(St. Matthews Church)  
5610 Addison Road  
Seat Pleasant  
Prince Georges County  
Maryland

HABS NO. MD-982

HABS

MD

17-SEPT,

3-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ADDISON CHAPEL  
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Location: 5610 Addison Road, Seat Pleasant, Prince George's County, Maryland

Present Owner: Vestry of Addison Parish, Episcopal Diocese of Washington

Present Use: Services held for special occasions only, such as funerals, weddings and Addison Chapel day.

Significance: Addison Chapel is one of the oldest standing ecclesiastical structures in Prince George's County. Although the current chapel (the third on this site) was probably built after the Revolutionary War, its simple Anglican styling reflects the Colonial-era, Church of England-influenced designs, of which few remain. Addison Chapel was first established in 1696 as a chapel of ease for St. John's at Broad Creek. The parish it serves was one of the thirty original Maryland parishes, created in 1692 when the Church of England was first established in the state. It was named for Colonel John Addison, of Oxon Hill plantation, a leading proponent of the Anglican Church. Addison was responsible for the establishment and construction of Addison Chapel. The chapel is also known as the worshipping, and subsequent burial, place of a number of prominent Maryland families such as the Addisons, Lowndes, Stodderts and Calverts.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1809-1816. According to the Appendix to Maryland Diocesan Journal of 1810, Bishop Thomas Claggett wrote in his Notitiae May 24, 1809- June 13, 1810, that on August 13, 1809, he visited the chapel and, finding it in "ruinous" condition, encouraged the congregation to begin construction of the church which they had long contemplated building. A later entry from this period (1809-10) stated that "this design hath since been put into operation, and is progressing; the walls

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of a new brick building have been erected, and a roof has been placed over them." The current chapel was built to replace the second (frame) structure on the site erected mid-18th century (dates of 1746 & 1760 are commonly given), which had replaced the original log structure erected ca. 1696.

2. Original and subsequent owners: The one-acre parcel on which the chapel was first erected was donated by Colonel John Addison in 1694. A second acre of ground was donated in 1731 by William Scott. Finally, 3.107 acres was added to the church grounds in a purchase from John and Emma Gregory in 1916. The property is owned by the Vestry of Addison Parish (Diocese of Washington).

3. Builder: The actual builder is unknown, although responsibility for the erection of the original chapel goes to Colonel John Addison. The second chapel, of frame construction, was built under the rectorship of Henry Addison. The current brick chapel was built under the rectorship of Walter Dulaney Addison. Both were descendants of Col. John Addison.

4. Original plans and construction: Addison Chapel was built in a simple, rectangular Anglican plan reflective of small rural chapels of the period. As typical, its unpretentious, gable-front design did not include a bell tower or portico. In meetinghouse tradition, there are separate entries for men and women. It reportedly had a barrel vaulted ceiling, since removed (National Register nomination).

5. Alterations and additions: Addison Chapel underwent renovation in 1902. The most visible change was the raising of the roof to its current steep pitch, and the addition of the cross-bracing in the front gable end. This change gave the chapel a Gothic Revival appearance, but also led to the elimination of the barrel-vaulted ceiling. The original box pews were replaced with the current two rows of open pews. Added to the chapel were stained glass rosette windows at both gable ends, and a gallery over the entry, accessed by a stair in the northeast corner. Changes have also been made to the windows at the north and/or south side elevations (there are round-arched windows on the north side, and flat-arched windows on the south side). Also, a doorway or window at the west wall has been enclosed with brick, and the altar area is of recent vintage. To the rear of the north side has been added a small, shed-roofed brick sacristy.

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B. Historical Context:

The original Addison Chapel, constructed of logs in 1694-1696, was among the first established churches in the county. Though the current chapel was erected after the Colonial period (1809-1816), it is still among the oldest parishes in Maryland. It was organized, and the first church erected, by Colonel John Addison of Oxon Hill Plantation. Addison was a staunch advocate of the Anglican Church, and is credited with playing a key role in the establishment of St. John's Church at Broad Creek. In 1692, an act of the assembly and governor's council established thirty parishes of the church of England in Maryland. The Broad Creek parish was one of the two parishes established at that time in what was to become Prince Georges County. A few years later, changing patterns of settlement created shifts in the population, necessitating a chapel of ease for St. John's. Thus, Col. Addison donated an acre of ground and had erected on it in 1694-96 a chapel for parishioners of this area, known as the "upper chapel" (Deed 2:71, Carroll County, 12 Nov. 1695) or Addison's Chapel.

By 1731 plans were being made to replace the original log chapel with a frame structure. That year William Scott donated an adjoining acre, later referred to as "Scott's Gift," for that purpose. As the deed read, "So long as it (the property) shall be appropriated to the use of a Church Chapell" (Deed 2:275). However, it was not until 1744 that the General Assembly passed an act making the chapel an official chapel of ease and the burial ground for King George Parish, and further granted permission to build a new chapel. Thus, under the rectorship of Rev. Henry Addison, grandson of Col. John Addison, the second chapel was constructed of wood frame, ca. 1746.

The current Addison Chapel building was erected between 1809 and 1816, under the rectorship of yet another descendant of Col. Addison, Rev. Walter Dulaney Addison. This time a brick structure was erected to replace the frame one, then said to be in ruinous condition. Rev. Walter Addison was one of the officiators at the funeral of George Washington. Also, during this period, Addison Chapel was used as a headquarters for British soldiers during their 1812 attack on Bladensburg.

In 1902 Addison Chapel was renovated, making a number of changes to the original structure. Most striking of these was the change in the roof line. The gable-front

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roof was given a steeper pitch, filling in the area with brick, and also adding Gothic Revival-style cross bracing and a stained-glass rosette window. Raising the roof unfortunately meant eliminating the barrel-vaulted interior. At this time, the original box pews were removed and salvaged, and open pews were installed. The gallery was also added. Also, an addition to the grounds came in 1916 when three adjoining acres were purchased to enlarge the cemetery.

By the late 1940s, the farmland surrounding Addison Chapel was being subdivided for new homes, bringing with it commercial development. Many of the old parishioners left the area at this time. Eventually, the congregation became too small to support the church. Fearful for the future of the chapel, a small trust fund was set up to help preserve it, under the rectorship of Rev. David Gleason. In 1969 the Maryland Historical Trust was asked to oversee the fund, and in 1970 they were given an architectural easement in order to insure the preservation of the chapel and cemetery. The chapel has since been closed for regular services and is now used only for funerals, weddings and for special services such as "Addison Chapel Day."

The cemetery serves as the final resting place for a number of prominent members of Addison Chapel. Among them are the graves of Christopher Lowndes and his wife, Elizabeth. Lowndes was a wealthy Bladensburg merchant, with a large import business, shipyard and rope manufactory. Also present is the grave of their daughter Rebecca Stoddert and her famous husband, Benjamin Stoddert, the first Secretary of the Navy. Addison Chapel was attended by other prominent Prince George's County families such as the Calverts and the Addisons.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Despite turn-of-the-20th-century changes, Addison Chapel still retains its simple, Anglican style, indicative of Colonial-period churches. Its type and scale rarely survive.
2. Condition of fabric: The chapel appears to be well maintained although some alterations and/or removal of the original fabric (especially interior detailing) has occurred.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: This is a small, rectangular structure measuring approximately 28' x 40'. It is one story in height, with a steeply pitched roof which houses a small gallery (above the entry). There is a small, square, shed-roofed addition to the rear of the north side elevation.

2. Foundations: The foundation is of rubble stone.

3. Walls: The walls are of brick laid in a Flemish bond with occasional glazed headers (the walls of the east front and south side appear to have been sand-blasted). The brick used in the gable ends when the roof was raised is laid in common bond and has a deeper red color brick. There is a three-course brick water table.

4. Structural system, framing: The chapel is of load-bearing masonry.

5. Stoops: At each of the two front doorways are two stone steps.

6. Chimneys: There is a brick chimney stack on the south side of the addition to the rear of the north side of the chapel.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two entries, balanced on the east gable facade, presumably one for men and another for women. The top of each doorway has a low, rounded arch with an arched brick lintel. There is a wide board surrounding the door with a narrow bead. Above the door is a stained-glass transom. The doors are wooden, four-panel doors. There is a doorway at the east elevation of the addition, with a plain surround and a metal door.

b. Windows: The typical window has large, twelve-over-twelve-light sash, recessed in a wooden casing with a narrow fillet molding. There are four windows along the south side and two along the north, the other two having been obscured by the addition. Windows on the north side have round-arched brick lintels while the south side windows have flat-arched lintels. The windows to the west

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rear, with flat-arched lintels, have been bricked in. At the east front there are no windows, with the exception of the addition of a small, stained-glass rosette window in the gable end. This same window appears in the gable end of the rear wall.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The chapel has a steeply pitched gable-front roof, covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: The eaves overhang in front, with ornamental cross bracing in the gable end.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Addison Chapel is comprised of one large room with a small gallery, and a sacristy addition to the rear of the north side. Upon entering, the gallery is above, with a stair in the northeast corner. The aisle lies straight ahead with open pews to either side and the raised altar area at the end of the aisle. To the north of the altar area is a doorway into the sacristy addition. This is a small square room with an outside entry at the east elevation.

2. Stairway: There is a stairway to the gallery, located at the northeast corner of the front of the chapel. It is a narrow, partially boxed, winder stair. The first run is open with a plain balustrade (rounded handrail and plain, squared newel and balusters) and enclosed along the east wall, beginning with the winders.

3. Flooring: There is wooden flooring seen in the area of the pews. Elsewhere, the floor is covered with carpeting.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls have paneled wainscoting. There is a simple, molded cornice demarcating the walls from the roof area. The ceiling is open exposing the interior walls of the roof which slope inward from either side towards the flat ceiling. The side walls and ceiling are covered with wooden siding with exposed rafters. The balustrade wall of the gallery is panelled, with the two center panels open with a square-within-an-x pattern. The wall directly behind the altar has been covered with vertical panelling, with a cornice with a diamond pattern incised above.

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5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The doorways are surrounded by a wide band with three, equal-sized fillets, with plain corner blocks. There are stained-glass transoms above the two front entries. There are wooden, four-panel doors.

b. Windows: The windows have the same surrounds as the doorways, with a plain, narrow sill. They are covered on the inside with louvered wooden shutters.

6. Decorative features and trim: To either side of the center aisle are open pews (not original), the ends and backs of which are paneled. The altar area is raised, with a simple wooden, paneled altar (modern). There is a paneled wooden octagonal podium to the south and a carved, pedestal podium with a scroll leaf capital to the north side. An organ also sits to the north side of the altar area. The gallery to the rear is supported with slightly tapering, squared posts, banded near the top. There is a old, marble baptismal font to the rear of the church, under the gallery.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: Although now equipped with central heat, the church was at one time heated with a wood-burning stove located near where the doorway into the sacristy is now located.

b. Lighting: Hexagonal-shaped glass lanterns (four) hang from chains from the ceiling. Sconces with glass lanterns are located along the side walls.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Addison Chapel sits atop a knoll. The east front is well shaded with mature trees. Despite the residential and commercial development surrounding it, the site itself seems peaceful and isolated. There is a gravel drive approach from the south, and the cemetery lies to the east, north and west.

2. Historic landscape design: Once an isolated country chapel, the area is now surrounded by residential and commercial development. Large old trees grace the front. The chapel is surrounded on three sides by the cemetery. The oldest graves are to the east front, on the original



one or two acres of ground. Here are found the raised graves of the Lowndes and Stoddert families.

3. Outbuildings: At the far north side of the cemetery is a small brick shed. Although of recent vintage, was constructed of brick in a style which resembles the chapel, so as to be compatible with it.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Interviews: An interview was conducted with Mrs. Doris Hoover, a lifetime member of Addison Chapel, on the 14th of November 1989.

#### B. Bibliography:

##### 1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Addison Chapel Foundation. "Addison Chapel," date unknown (a brief history).

Parish, Mrs. Preston (Keeper of the Maryland Register, Maryland Historical Trust). National Register of Historic Places, Inventory--Nomination Form for St. Matthew's Church (Addison Chapel), prepared 18 March 1971.

Ripley, Rev. Reginald John. "Addison Chapel," Booklet compiled by Rev. Ripley, the proceeds of which to go to the restoration fund, date unknown.

##### 2. Secondary and published sources:

Rifkind, Carole. A Field Guide to American Architecture. New York: A Plume Book, New American Library, 1980.

Wilfong, James C., Jr. "The Original Parishes," The Prince George's Post, 30 November 1967.

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of Addison Chapel was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, chief, and the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission on behalf of the Prince Georges County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to document select sites throughout the county. A memorandum of agreement was signed in August of 1988 and the project, to span one year, began in January of 1989. The site selection was made by Gail Rothrock, director, and Susan G. Pearl, research historian, of the HPC. They also provided access to their research and information on file with the HPC, as well as their extensive knowledge of county history. The large format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by HABS historian Catherine C. Lavoie who accompanied the photographer into the field for on-site investigation and architectural description.